

X.—*Notes on the Avifauna of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides.* By EDGAR L. LAYARD, C.M.G., F.Z.S., &c., H.B.M. Consul, and E. LEOPOLD C. LAYARD, Vice-Consul at Noumea. *With Remarks by the Rev. CANON TRISTRAM, F.R.S., C.M.Z.S., &c.*

(Plate V.)

WE have one more novelty to describe from New Caledonia :—

ÆGOTHELES SAVESI, sp. nov. (Plate V.)

Æg. suprâ et subtùs nigra, albo pulverulento undulata, hâc colore plurimis striis angustissimis undulantibus et interruptis transversim in unâquâque plumâ variegato; primariis et rectricibus, præter duas medias et externas, in pogonio externo tantum striatis: pileo nigricante, vix albo variegato; tarsi nudis.

Long. tota 12·8 in., al. 6·6, caudæ 6·1, tarsi 1·1, dig. med. cum ungue 1·25, rostri a rict. 1·3; rictûs lat. 1·25.

An example of this *Ægotheles*, which, from its size and coloration, cannot be confounded with any other known species, was caught at Tongué, not far from Noumea, on the night of the 11th of April last, having flown into a bedroom, probably attracted by the light. It was brought to my friend M. Savés by the captor, who stated that none of the natives had ever seen any thing like it before. With great liberality M. Savés presented it to us. He describes the irides as being sienna-yellow, and says that the stomach contained small coleoptera. It proved a male on dissection.

M. Savés's occupation having taken him through most parts of the island, he has had unrivalled opportunities of collecting, but, unfortunately, has not retained many of his specimens, and many have suffered from the destructive agents of a tropical climate. He tells us there are many birds in the forests of the north of the island (that part being much more tropical in its features than the southern end) that are not found about Noumea. This is what we have always expected; and a collecting-trip to that end of the island is one of our day-dreams.



J. Smit lith.

Hanhart imp.

ÆGOTHELES SAVESI

An English settler on the west coast tells us he believes that a night-bird is not uncommon, the origin of the many extraordinary sounds heard in the forest at night. He says that no native will move in the bush after dark, and that their terror of night-birds is so extreme that they will not even willingly look at them, saying they are demons! not "canny," as the Scotch folk have it. He has never seen any of these birds, however; and all naturalists know the wonderful sounds emitted by tree-frogs; so he may be mistaken.

LEPTORNIS AUBRYANUS, Verr. et Desm. R. Z. 1860, p. 432.

Anthochaera aubryanus, Gray, Brenchley's Voy. pl. vi. p. 364.

Here again we are indebted to our friend M. Savés, who has kindly presented us with what has long been a desideratum to our collection. The bird in question was shot near Noumea, soon after the occurrence of hurricanes that ravaged the country in the early part of the year. These storms seem to have unsettled all the bird population, scattering them from their secure haunts even to the trees in the town. The Pink-headed Dove (*Ptilopus greyi*) was shot in hundreds all round Noumea; "Notus" (*Phœnorhina goliath*) and White-throated Pigeons (*Ianthænas hypænochoa*) cruised about our garden; while the scarce, forest-loving, Banded Honey-eater (*Glycyphila fasciata*) was forced to seek its nectar from the lantana bushes growing in the gardens in the town. Unfortunately E. L. L. was compelled to go to Sydney, and L. L., being in charge of the Consulate, could not leave his post to reap this unexpected harvest; so we did not get much.

The coloration and description of the soft parts in the figure of *Leptornis aubryanus* are, as we have long suspected, quite wrong. All our inquiries have failed to elicit any thing of a bird with "the sides of the head naked and of a clear reddish colour;" and in the plate in the 'Voyage of the Curaçoa,' which we have had copied and sent to the forest districts, they are represented of a fine dark crimson. This is utterly wrong! the bare space about the eye is *bright yellow*, fading, after drying, into a dirty reddish brown. There appears also to be a yellow ear-tuft; but our friend's

stuffing is not equal to his generosity ! we will report further on this point when we have the luck to obtain a fresh specimen. The one in question was brought into town and sold on the market for "gibier !" The legs and feet appear to have been yellow-brown ; the soles of the latter are yellow even now ; claws brown. The bill is rightly described. Mr. Savés says the irides were yellow. Sex male.

FALCO MELANOGENYS, Gould.

This noble Falcon appears to be not uncommon here. L. L. obtained a fine ♀ close to Noumea in April last ; and M. Savés has also procured it. L. L.'s specimen had made free with a neighbour's poultry, the remains of which were in her throat when killed. This Hawk extends also to the New Hebrides. We have received a fine specimen in alcohol, shot on Vaté by Mr. Glisson.

SULA PISCATOR (Linn.).

Several of these Gannets were driven ashore by the hurricanes, and picked up on the beach exhausted. They were purchased and eaten by some of the French "colons" as a rare kind of "Duck !" "There is no accounting for taste !"

STERNULA PLACENS, Gould, Ann. N. H. ser. 4, vol. viii. p. 192 (1871).

Some time since Mr. Masters, the gentleman in charge of the Macleayan Museum in Sydney, called our attention to specimens of a *Sternula* which he had formerly identified with *S. nereis* of Gould, stating they were distinct, and probably that called *S. placens* by the same author.

While visiting Sydney lately, E. L. L. compared specimens procured by L. L. on the islands of Anseвата with the plate recently published by Mr. Gould*, and showed them to Mr. Masters.

Our birds show very distinctly the black tip to the bill described, as if the point had been dipped in the ink-pot ! but differ somewhat in the marking of the head, the black extending from the black cap in front of the eye, not reaching as far as the nostrils (as figured). Mr. Masters had never

* Birds of New Guinea, pt. iii. (1876).

seen specimens from Torres Straits in the full breeding-plumage, in which we brought them from Anseвата; we have no doubt, however, that our birds belong to this species. The description of the eggs (Ibis, 1878, p. 265) may therefore be ascribed to *S. placens*, Gould, and *S. nereis* erased from the catalogue of New-Caledonian birds for the present.

CHARADRIUS FULVUS, Gm.

Captain Legge (*in epistola*) states that L. L.'s account (Ibis, 1878, p. 262) of *C. fulvus* breeding in these islands in company with the preceding Tern has been received with surprise and incredulity by ornithologists at home as being contrary to probability. We can assure our brethren of the B. O. U. that the fact is strictly correct. L. L. has shot dozens of *C. fulvus*, and is quite familiar with their appearance. He was close to the old bird and young ones several times when on the island where she was, and would have shot her for the pot but for the presence of her brood. Had he known that there was any thing remarkable in the fact of the bird breeding in these latitudes, he would have procured both old and young*.

UROSPIZIAS TORQUATA (Vig. et Horsf.).

Urospiza torquata, nob., Ibis, 1878, p. 251.

The birds we have hitherto identified as belonging to this species, Mr. Masters has shown us to be undoubtedly the young of *Accipiter haplochrous*, Sel. We suspect that the full adult plumage is not assumed till the third or fourth year, as we have obtained birds in the young dress in full breeding-στοργή. The size and form of the bill and legs of the true *U. torquata* at once separate it. It has never occurred here to us; and M. Marie, though he includes it in his list, *never had a specimen from hence*. The (*) being omitted before its name in his list, it may therefore be expunged till further notice.

[Mr. Gurney, on examining the specimens, indorses Mr. Layard's impression that those from New Caledonia are immature *U. haplochroa*, and that the individual from the Loyalty Islands is probably *U. torquata*.

* I confess I was equally ignorant!—E. L. L.

I may here observe that Mr. Gurney, having examined my adult specimen of *U. torquata* from Aneiteum, New Hebrides, is inclined to think it not absolutely identical with the true *U. torquata*, but somewhat intermediate between it and *U. approximans*. I trust, however, that he will discuss this point himself in the pages of 'The Ibis.' I have also just passed over to Mr. Gurney a specimen of *U. albigularis*, collected by Lieut. Richards, R.N., in the Solomon Islands, in a state of plumage hitherto undescribed, of which also I trust your readers will hear more.—H. B. T.]

[CHALCITES ———?]

The *Chalcites* of New Caledonia, of the identity of which Mr. Layard is in doubt (*Ibis*, 1878, p. 253), is *C. lucidus* (Gm.), the same as the Australian bird.—H. B. T.]

ESACUS MAGNIROSTRIS (Geoffr.).

We forget if we have recorded the capture of this fine species. It is omitted from MM. Verreaux and Des Murs's list in the 'Revue Zoologique,' 1880, but included by M. Marie in the 'Actes de la Société Linnéenne de Bordeaux,' t. xxvii. 1870. It is common at the north of the island on Huon Islands; and Lieut. Richards, commanding H.M. Gunboat 'Rénard,' shot specimens on the eastern side of the Wodin Pass, not far from Noumea.

We are indebted to a fair correspondent on Aneiteum for the addition of several birds to those already registered from that island (*cf. Ibis*, 1876, p. 259). Our kind friend actually took lessons in skinning from us that she might supply us with specimens; and her first attempt would not have discredited many an amateur of several years' standing.

Among the collection sent us lately occur the following not noticed by Canon Tristram (*loc. cit.*):—*Urospizias approximans*, young and adult*, *Charadrius fulvus*, *Actitis incana* and *Ianthænas leopoldi*, Tristram (*Ibis*, 1879, p. 193).

Through the kindness of the Premier of New South Wales,

* [This must certainly be the variety of *U. torquata* already noted by me from New Hebrides.—H. B. T.]

Sir Henry Parkes, C.M.G. &c., our library has lately been enriched by the presentation by the Government of New South Wales of the first three volumes of the 'Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales,' which we have long endeavoured to procure, but hitherto in vain.

We are now enabled to criticise some of the remarks of Mr. E. P. Ramsay, the curator of the Australian Museum, in that Journal, on the birds of the New Hebrides; and we commence with

MERULA ALBIFRONS, Ramsay, Pr. L. S. N. S. W. vol. iii. p. 336, from Erromanga.

We have not had an opportunity of seeing a skin of this bird; but in spite of Mr. Ramsay's stating that he has compared it with an *M. pritzbueri**, we cannot help thinking the two are identical, and that what he has taken for a discoloration of the "white" on the head, neck, and chest by the alcohol in which the specimen was placed, is in reality the proper colour, and that the "pure white feathers on the chest," and the "few white-tipped feathers on the abdomen," indicate that the typical example was suffering from albinism.

In very old specimens of our *M. pritzbueri* the colour fades out to nearly white. Further, we know that this species ranges to Tanna, whence L. L. brought the palest-capped bird we have yet seen. Now Tanna is in full sight of, and very near to, Erromanga: what more likely than that the species should extend thither? though proximity is not a sure cause, as witness the fact that this bird is not found either on New Caledonia or the still nearer island, Maré, being replaced on the former by *M. xanthopus*, Forst., on the latter by *M. maræensis*, Layard & Tristram. Another thing also strikes us. Mr. Ramsay identifies an *Erythrura* sent from Erromanga as *E. cyaneovirens*, Peale. This latter is a Samoan species, and, for aught we yet know, confined to that group of islands. Has Mr. Ramsay not mistaken it for our *E. cyaneifrons*? which also is found in Tanna, though, like the

* Misprinted "*pritzbuesi*" by Mr. Ramsay.

Merula, originally procured in, and described from, Lifu. We cannot recollect any land-bird common to Fiji and the New Hebrides, *much less any Samoan* species; but there are several examples of Loyalty-Islands and New-Caledonian species being found in both localities. Of course, not having actually seen specimens, these remarks are only suggestions.

MYZOMELA CARDINALIS, *l. c.* p. 337.

Under this head Mr. Ramsay takes exception to our identification of a *Myzomela* killed by L. L. on Vaté, and brought to Noumea in alcohol (*cf.* Ibis, 1878, p. 270), stating we had probably alluded to *M. cardinalis*, as *M. sanguinolenta*, the species to which we had assigned it, was "confined to Australia."

Hitherto, up to March 1879, the New-Caledonian bird has been considered identical with the Australian species. Mr. Forbes, however, has separated it (P. Z. S. 1879, p. 260) on account of some differences; but it is so like the Australian bird that it might well be mistaken for *M. sanguinolenta* vera. Whether the Vaté bird was *M. sanguinolenta* or its ally, *M. caledonica*, Forbes, as we were not aware of the differences at the time, we will not undertake to say; but *M. cardinalis*, which is well known to us, it certainly was not.

MYIAGRA MELANURA*, Ramsay, *l. c.* p. 339.

Mr. Ramsay, in attributing error to E. L. L. in describing the female of this bird as *black*, has fallen into error himself. He is apparently unaware that the *black-breasted* and *chestnut-breasted* birds belong to two distinct races, and that we have numerous examples of both sexes of both colours (*cf.* Ibis, 1878, pp. 271, 272, and Ibis, 1880, pp. 226, 227, and paper in the 'Field,' therein quoted). There are *several* well-known black-throated species and red-throated species (e.g. *M. viridinitens* and *M. caledonica* in New Caledonia, and *M. luguieri* and *M. intermedia* in Lifu); and Mr. Ramsay's "invariable" rule falls to the ground.

* Misprinted "*melamera*" by Mr. Ramsay.

"PTILOPUS APICALIS, Bp. *l. c.* p. 339.

"*Hab.* Havanah Harbour, Vela Habour, &c."

Mr. Ramsay writes, "This is probably the species referred to by Mr. E. L. Layard as *P. greyi* (*Ibis*, 1878?, p. 275)."

We have followed Gray, Finsch and Hartlaub, Verreaux and Des Murs, Canon Tristram, D. G. Elliot in his exhaustive monograph on the *Ptilopi* (*P. Z. S.* 1878, p. 500), and other authorities in assigning the name of *P. greyi* to the Dove which is found throughout New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands, and New Hebrides far up to the northward. Whether these are all wrong, and Mr. Ramsay only is right, we must leave better judges than ourselves to decide. As we have sent home numerous specimens, there can be no doubt as to the identity of the species; and, as far as we ourselves can understand plain descriptions, we have no doubt that the birds are *P. greyi* and not *P. apicalis*.

XI.—*List of Birds collected by Mr. H. O. Forbes in the Island of Java.* By FRANCIS NICHOLSON, F.Z.S.

SINCE my last communication on the ornithology of Java (*Ibis*, 1879, p. 164), I have acquired for my collection the series of birds obtained by Mr. H. O. Forbes during his recent travels in Java. At present I confine myself to giving a list of the specimens, with the interesting notes given by Mr. Forbes on the labels of the birds; but I hope ere long to publish a complete catalogue of the birds of Java, if I can manage to induce Mr. Forbes to continue collecting in that island. I think it right to state, apropos of my statement that Mr. Wallace's Javan collections had been dispersed without a catalogue, that I have received a letter from that gentleman informing me that a complete series of his birds was deposited in the British Museum along with his other collections, and that he still has all his notes, which he has kindly offered to place at my disposal if I should carry out my present intention of making a full list of the birds of Java.